

Paris
on the
Grand

The Old Boys' Reunion
Paris, Ontario, 1905

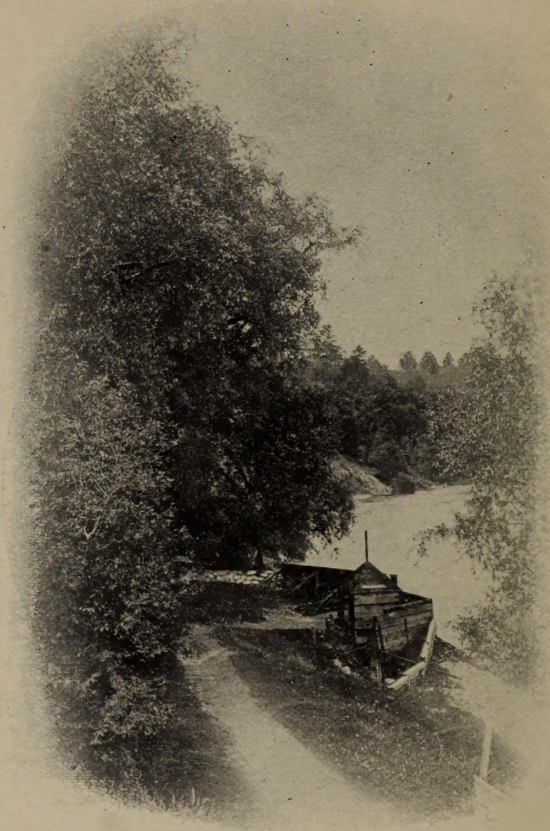
*Oh town so dear, so beautiful,
Old Paris on the Grand,
Thy sons and daughters sing thy praise
In many a distant land.
And oft on Afric's kopjes drear,
Or Phillipino's shore,
Came memories fond of home and thee,
And happy days of yore.*



*"Oh town so dear, so beautiful,
Old Paris on the Grand."*



*"Then the red men left that region,
Sought out forests deep and woody,
Left the land to white intruders,
Left, and never back there came they."*



*“Then, once, men for oil a-boring,
Struck a stream whose forceful water
Through the orifice came gushing,
And this stream held healing virtues,
All who quaffed its waters freely,
Strangers were to those diseases
Which, upon their tracks leave misery,
And e’en those vexed by diseases
Drank—were cured—and made entire.”*

“Paris on the Grand”

A POEM

ON THE OCCASION OF

The Old Boys' Reunion

PARIS

AUGUST 14TH TO 19TH

1905



JOSEPHINE SMITH



"For a school both large and central,
* * * * *

*Students trudging up the hill-side,
Wondered why the quest of knowledge
Should their bodies make so weary,
Wondered why these halls of learning
Rivals were of eagles' eyry."*

Paris on the Grand.



SHOULD you ask me now to tell you
All about our town so lovely,
All its history past and present,
I should answer : I should tell you.

Eighty years ago it may be
In the spot where Upper Town is,
In that valley so secluded,
Lying 'twixt the verdant hillside
And the rippling shining river,
Stood an ancient Indian village
Where the children of the forest
Had for years lived unmolested.
But in time came pale-faced strangers,
Came and settled there among them,
Hewed their trees so large and ancient,
Shaped them into habitations,
Ploughed the fields and seed therein cast
And in due time reaped the harvest.
Then the red men left that region,
Sought out forests deep and woody,
Left the land to white intruders,
Left, and never back there came they.
Slowly grew the little hamlet,
Grew at last into a village,

Later still unto a town grew.
Fifty years ago last Spring-time
As a town it had existence ;
Oh what visions grand and splendid
Of a city great and mighty,
Filled the breasts of these new townsmen
As they wrought both late and early,
And some there with eye prophetic
Saw the mighty power latent
In the murmuring, flowing river.
Dams they built across the water,
Iron works were set in motion.
Mills were built for making flour,
Mills for grinding fine the plaster,
Woollen mills too, large and modern,
Which ere long so great a fame had,
That their products world-wide known were,
For their goodness and their beauty.
Work these many mills provided,
For the artisans so skilful.
Nature too had kindly hidden
Treasures underneath earth's surface,
In the hills were beds of gypsum,
Gravel beds were there in number.
Then, once, men for oil a-boring,
Struck a stream whose forceful water
Through the orifice came gushing,
And this stream held healing virtues,
All who quaffed its waters freely,

Strangers were to those diseases
Which, upon their tracks leave misery,
And e'en those vexed by diseases
Drank—were cured—and made entire.
But, as nothing ere was perfect,
In this world by sin accurséd,
'Twas a fact that feuds unnumbered
Often marred these scenes so tranquil,
For the town became divided
As it grew, and now the river
Formed the line of demarcation
'Twixt the Upper Town and Lower,
And antagonism bitter
Raged between these different sections.
Now 'twas not a common interest,
But a local good each sought for.
Thus it was when need arose, there
For a school both large and central,
That such fierce dissensions shook them,
Each determined then to have it,
That, to quell the fierce disturbance,
Help was asked from brainy stranger,
To decide the burning question,
And he, wishing to deride them,
Pointed out two sites quite lofty,
Thinking thus to shame their quarrels.
One of these they built the school on,
So it was, that in the future,
Students trudging up the hill-side,

Wondered why the quest of knowledge
Should their bodies make so weary,
Wondered why these halls of learning
Rivals were of eagles' eyry.
Still another knotty problem
Was the spot to build a market,
And then, after wild discussion,
'Twas the Upper Town which triumphed!
But the architect who planned it,
Knowing Romish Church was needed,
And as Romanist the man was,
In the shape of cross contrived it,
So that if in the near future
It should be for sale, his churchmen
Could it purchase for a chapel.
But it ne'er served as a chapel,
But a short time as a market.
Still this building, now historic
Served for many different uses.
In one room the city fathers
Held their grave deliberations,
Thrashed out all the various questions
Which concerned the public welfare.
There the school-board held its meetings,
Oft discussed in solemn conclave,
How to train the young idea
With the scanty means forthcoming.
In that room too, many a culprit
Tremblingly awaited sentence,

Lest the Court should then consign him
To the dungeons underneath him,
Which received the evil doers.
Sometimes in the days departed,
Had you passed that way at midnight,
You'd have heard the fiddle scraping,
As some tripped the light fantastic,
Heard a voice, high and stentorian,
"Calling off" to aid the dancers.
Here were held the concerts, lectures,
Plays and, sometimes too, church socials,
For the old Town Hall was noted
As a place of entertainment.
E'en the strangely quiet sleepers
In the church-yard wrought confusion,
For the burial place soon filled up,
And another, farther distant
From the town, the Council purchased.
It was then that the Incumbent
Of the English Church requested,
That the Council sell a portion
To the flock 'mongst which he laboured,
So that he might consecrate it
And might render it thus holy.
But the leader of the Council
Claimed that death made all men equal,
T'was not theirs to make distinctions;
But, if bent on consecrating
Any portion of the graveyard,

All, or none, should have the blessing.
Loud applause met this decision,
So the vexed ecclesiastic
Urged his flock to buy that portion
On an eastern hill-top lying,
So thus was the town enlivened
By a third place of interment.
Once the town was rent asunder
O'er the question whether cattle
Should be driven forth to pasture
From the town, or should they wander
O'er the streets and on the sidewalks.
E'en a By-Law was prepared then
To decide this weighty question,
In the end the cows were banished.
These, and many minor squabbles,
Progress of the town retarded,
Kept the Council in a ferment
In the century departed.
More disastrous were these quarrels
Than the flood which, one wet summer,
Somewhere in the early eighties,
Changed the Nith, that gentle streamlet,
To a raging, roaring river,
Which, in wild tumultuous fury,
Swept the pottery before it,
Carried it with force adown stream,
Havoc wrought with dams and bridges,
And the sulphur spring it flooded.

One night in the mild September,
As the century was dawning,
Raged in Lower Town a fire,
In the mill 'twas first discovered.
Then a wind like a tornado
Blew and fanned the flames to fury,
Which block after block ignited,
Until that entire section
Looked like burning fiery furnace,
Felt like furnace seven times heated.
All across the flaming heavens,
Burning brands were flying swiftly,
Lighting, as they fell, more fires,
Till the people, panic-stricken,
Deemed the town doomed to destruction.
Some, like Israelites of old time,
Gathered up their precious treasures,
Ready, in these midnight hours,
To depart to place of refuge.
Some the whole night fought the fire,
Worked to keep their homes in safety.
Then old quarrels were forgotten,
Then, indeed, as the Good Book says,
Better were the neighbours near by
Than the brothers who were distant,
For all helped to quell the fire.
Trifling seemed those petty causes
Which before wrought disagreements,
Once again all men were brothers

Ready with their acts so kindly.
For, as the refiner's furnace,
Purges out the baser metal,
So this awful conflagration
Burnt out all those feuds of old time.
Jealousies were all forgotten,
Brotherhood of man established.
Like the ancient fabled phoenix,
Then rose Paris from its ashes
Lovelier now than 'twas aforetime.
Now each one neath his own roof tree,
Sat at peace with friend and neighbor,
And his own domain now tended,
Until like the rose it blossomed,
So these many homes now flourish,
These comprising pretty Paris.



*“In one room the city fathers
Held their grave deliberations,
Thrashed out all the various questions
Which concerned the public welfare.”*

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